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MTPDS Program Monthly Newsletter

Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) program is a 3-year USAID-funded project supporting the professional development of teachers in Malawi and implementation of the National Primary Curriculum. MTPDS is being implemented by Creative Associates International, RTI International and Seward, Inc, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

MTPDS supports National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development



Darles Mbewe, Coordinator, Department of Teacher Education and Development, MoEST

The National Strategy for Teacher Development and Education (NSTED) underpins the work of the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) in teacher education, yet few stakeholders are aware of this document or its contents. The NSTED was approved in 2008, but has never been properly disseminated. MTPDS has been tasked with addressing this situation.

On December 7th, the Department of Teacher Education and Development (DTED) convened an extraordinary meeting of the Technical Working Group (TWG) on Teacher Education where MTPDS presented an abridged version of the NSTED for endorsement, together with a policy framework, strategy and plan to support NSTED implementation

Members observed that the NSTED was drafted before the National Education Sector Plan (NESP), which provides an overarching policy framework for all departments. Therefore, the structure of the NSTED summary has been adjusted to make it consistent with that of NESP. Participants also emphasized that the summary should retain the integrity of the policy so that no important aspects of the policy are left out.

Participants observed that there has been substantial progress in implementing policies relating to Initial Teacher Education in the 3 years since the NSTED was drafted. For example, the capacity of Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) has been expanded and alternative modes of training have been introduced through Open and Distance Learning (ODL). Some progress has also been made in enhancing the management of teacher education, for example, through the decentralization of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS). However, it was also noted that there has been little progress in implementing policy priorities relating to Continuous Professional Development (CPD). For this reason, MTPDS will focus the remainder of its time on supporting the MoEST in implementing such policies, including: (i) the linking of CPD to career path advancement; (ii) the accreditation of CPD; (iii) the capacity building of PEAs to deliver CPD; and (iv) the ensuring of regular access to CPD for serving teachers.

The meeting endorsed the NSTED summary and associated documents subject to minor amendments. These amendments will be effected prior to seeking final approval from MoEST senior management and wider national dissemination of the documents. The target audience will comprise a range of stakeholders including teachers, head teachers, PEAs, DEMs, TTC lecturers, MoEST officials at divisional and national levels and development partners.

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Participants to the extraordinary meeting of the Technical Working Group on Teacher Education

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"Phonological awareness and initial letter sound are the secrets to EGRA and to children learning how to read and write in the first term of Standard 1." Pamela Ndazona, Std 1 teacher implementing EGRA methods, Makanda Primary School, Ntchisi district

Continuous Professional Development Update: Third CPD leadership module rolls out

In December 2011, MTPDS embarked on training for its third module on leadership targeting all head teachers and deputies nationwide. The frequency of leadership trainings reflects the conviction that school leadership is crucial to ensuring the effectiveness of schools. Schools with able leadership stand out in their performance.

Module 3 focuses on orienting school leaders on promoting gender sensitivity and equity in schools and promoting involvement of community members in school activities. It is widely recognized that involvement of community members has been taken for granted by some school leaders for too long. Leadership Module 3 aims to reinvigorate school leaders' understanding of these issues and inspire them to take action.

Early reports from training of facilitators indicate that this module has been well received by both PEAs and school leaders. Some school leaders were surprised to have a topic on community involvement as a CPD issue. The roll out of Leadership Module 3 activities was started at Mponela where core trainers convened on December 19th to plan the delivery of this module. By the end of January it is anticipated that the training will have reached over 11,000 head-teachers and deputies head-teachers across every district in the country.

The next CPD trainings will be on Literacy. Literacy Module 2 will target all standard 1-4 teachers and will be rolled out in March 2012 in order to allow for cluster level trainings during the Easter holidays. Literacy Module 2 intends to strengthen Standard 1-4 teachers' capacity in teaching literacy lessons. For the first time, Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) techniques and skills will be introduced to teachers in the lower classes.

Teachers will acquire skills in the integration of assessment in the teaching process of languages, as emphasized in the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR). Helping teachers to implement concepts from PCAR is one of the key elements that led to the birth of MTPDS. More literacy and leadership modules will be rolled out by the end of 2012.



Dorothy Matiti (PEMA) at the Training of Trainers workshop at Mponela TDC



A PEA shares experience at a Training of Facilitators in Mzimba South



Dyson Mughandira, SEMA Northern Education Division and Charles Kapichi, SEMA Central West Division at Training of Trainers workshop at Mponela Teacher Development Centre

Voices from the field: Literacy fairs mobilize community participation



A focus group meeting with parents, teachers and MTPDS staff at Ntchisi LEA School



A Standard 2 learner reading a Standard 6 pupils' book at Mpherere Primary School, Ntchisi

The end of the Malawian school term has always been an occasion when the community converges on the school to learn about pupil achievement. In December 2011, MTPDS staff visited three schools in Ntchisi District where they witnessed communities celebrating local achievers in literacy as young as five and six years old.

On December 9th, MTPDS staff visited Ntchisi LEA Primary School. The teacher, Rita Kabowa, demonstrated the methods she has been using with Standard 1 learners. The entire school gathered on the playground, together with parents and community members. Rita showed the guests how children find it easy to start by learning letter sounds before learning letter combinations to make words.

At the second school, Mpherere, the community was shown what their children in Agnes Jabesi's Standard 1 class can do. The school's older pupils danced *Malipenga* and sang choral songs in praise of education. The center of attraction was a Standard 2 girl who amazed everyone with her reading abilities. This student was first identified as an outstanding learner when she was in Standard 1 and has continued to impress ever since. When one parent challenged the girl with a random page in a Standard 6 Chichewa textbook she was able to read the passage with fluency and meaning. The attending guests were awed. They clapped wildly and came forward to *fupa* (present gifts) as she read on unperturbed. At Makanda School, the teacher, Pamela Ndazona, demonstrated a literacy lesson in which learners had to search for words. There were word cards on a board and some in a word tree. Other words were held up on large cards by older learners from upper classes.

In all three schools, the MTPDS team sat down with parents, teachers and the zone's PEA for a focus group discussion. The team was interested in finding out more about the impact of the literacy intervention on learners after just three months of being in school. They were also interested to hear how the community was involved in helping children acquire literacy skills.

Teachers expressed the opinion that the *Sosa* series, which preceded the current PCAR, helped lay a good foundation by focusing on letter knowledge. "EGRA is not very different from *Sosa*," remarked one teacher. Another teacher said she found it helpful that literacy intervention lessons were scripted and that putting emphasis on the initial letter sound was helping learners learn letters quickly. The zone's PEA, Mr. Malithano added that teachers found it easy to follow a systematic format that started with modeling for learners, provided them with guided practice, and then let them practice independently.

Parents at one school said they had formed an EGRA Committee, and that they were made to feel welcome inside the classrooms. The chair of one SMC said teachers were "conscious that members of the EGRA committee would visit the school at any time" which encouraged them to put in their best efforts all of the time. The MTPDS team returned to Lilongwe highly impressed with what teachers in Ntchisi were achieving.



A Standard 1 learner learns to write before end of first term, Mpherere Primary School, Ntchisi

MoEST and MTPDS work to clarify roles and responsibilities in teacher education

On 6 December 2011, MoEST and MTPDS organized a stakeholders meeting at Lilongwe Hotel to clarify the roles and responsibilities of departments and institutions involved in initial training, continuous professional development and management of primary school teachers. Participants included officials from education division and district offices, teacher training colleges, development partners, DIAS, DTED, Department of Public Service Management (DPSM), Department of Education Planning (DEP), Department of Basic Education (DBE) and Malawi Institute of Education (MIE),

The purpose of the meeting was to give stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to improving coordination between and among the departments and institutions. MOEST has for a long time wanted to clarify and harmonize the roles and responsibilities of the various department and institutions to ensure greater efficiency. In October 2010, the MoEST asked DIAS to coordinate the process with the support of MTPDS. By February 2011, a discussion paper was produced which outlined the purposes and functions of the departments and institutions in teacher education, continuous professional development and management while interpreting their separate roles and responsibilities as prescribed in the 2005 report of the Functional Review of the Ministry. This paper was presented to heads of the departments and institutions at a meeting on 22 February 2011. The paper has since been amended to incorporate the observations made at that meeting.

The meeting of December 6th resulted in agreement on the tasks to be performed by departments and institutions involved in initial training, professional development and management of primary school teachers. Another important outcome was the clarification of the roles of Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) and their relation to DIAS and DTED. It was explained that the PEAs are officers in DIAS who have both management and training responsibilities.

The paper will now be presented to management of Ministry for approval of the agreed roles and responsibilities including the tasks to be performed by the departments and institutions. This will be followed by dissemination meetings and workshops to develop guidelines for the implementation of some selected recommendations.



Participants discuss MoEST roles and responsibilities

Introducing Dr. Stephen Backman, Deputy Chief of Party, MTPDS



**Dr Stephen Backman,
MTPDS Deputy Chief of Party**

We are pleased to announce the arrival of Dr. Stephen Backman, Deputy Chief of Party for MTPDS. Dr. Backman was previously the Chief of Party for the USAID-funded South Sudan Technical Assistance Program, a project which provided technical assistance focusing on capacity building and systems strengthening to the South Sudan Ministry of Education. Dr. Backman received his PhD in Curriculum, Teaching, and Educational Policy from Michigan State University. He has taught at both the primary school and university levels, teaching courses on teacher education and language instruction. He has lived, worked, and conducted research on education in Africa for over ten years in various countries including South Sudan, Tanzania, South Africa, Lesotho, and Ghana. Dr. Backman is excited to join the MTPDS team and is looking forward to making his contribution to this program as it works to improve the education of Malawian children.

Events Calendar for January 2012

Ongoing Program Activities

Teacher Education Policy Support

- Ensure distribution of copies of the NSTED document to members of TWG on Teacher Education
- Ensure distribution of copies of the NSTED document to TTCs
- Finalize and submit NSTED Implementation Guidelines to USAID and MoEST for approval
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities of MoEST Departments and Institutions
- Submit clarified roles and responsibilities to MoEST for approval
- Finalize drafting of paper on teacher competencies

Continuous Professional Development

- CPD Leadership Module 3 Zonal trainings for head-teachers and CPD mentors
- Monitoring and supervision of CPD Leadership Module 3 Zonal trainings for head-teachers and CPD mentors

Teaching and Learning Materials

- Reviewing Standard 3 and 4 textbooks
- Procurement and distribution plans and costs for supplementary materials

Planned Events

Teacher Education Policy Support

- January 16-18: Workshop on draft implementation guidelines involving members of TWG on teacher education and representatives of the 6 Division and 34 Districts Education offices, teachers and other education personnel for feedback

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

- January 8-9 & 15-16: Monitoring of leadership 3 zonal trainings during weekends
- January 18 (Or 25) : Meeting for District Education Managers to discuss their roles in supporting CPD activities to supplement what MTPDS is doing and gear up for sustaining CPD activities after project life

Early Grade Reading Assessment

- January 7-8: Review meeting with Standard 1 teachers in Ntchisi and Salima on implementation of reading intervention programme, *Maziko a Kuwerenga*.

- January 23-27: Dissemination of 2010 Malawi EGRA National Baseline Survey report

Monitoring and Evaluation

- January 23-27: Planning training programme with MoEST for National Primary Curriculum Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and Strategy
- January 30-February 8: Training workshop for PEAs in the implementation of National Primary Curriculum Monitoring and Evaluation

Editor's Corner: The MTPDS newsletter intends to provide insights on activities, achievements, and success stories from the field. We are inviting readers to send their comments, contributions and questions or tips for teacher professional development.

Please send your contributions to: The Editor, MTPDS Program, Area 10/612, Tsoka Road, Private Bag B481, Lilongwe. Tel: +265 1 794 977, Email:

info@mtpds.rti.org Web: www.mtpds.org Useful downloadable resources: <http://www.mtpds.org/resources/CPD-manuals>